

He Gave Us Prophets

Study Guide

LESSON
FOUR

DYNAMICS OF THE COVENANTS



THIRD MILLENNIUM
MINISTRIES

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HOW TO USE THIS LESSON AND STUDY GUIDE

This study guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video lesson. If you do not have access to the video, the study guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the lesson and study guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule viewing** — In the Notes section of the study guide, the lesson has been divided into sections that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the study guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each section and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Notes

I. Introduction (0:28)

II. Covenant Ideals (1:33)

The prophets understood that there were certain ideals for the covenant relationship between God and Israel.

A. Covenant Structures (3:00)

The Old Testament describes Yahweh's covenants with Israel as if they were patterned around ancient Near-Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties.

Suzerain-vassal treaties were always based on the kindness of the emperor. This is also true in the Bible's ideal of covenant.

In every suzerain-vassal treaty in the ancient world, emperors required loyalty from their subjects. In every covenant in the Old Testament, God required loyalty from his people.

God entered into five covenant relationships:

- Adam:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

- Noah:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

- Abraham:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

- Moses:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

- David:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

- New Covenant:
 - Benevolence:

 - Responsibility:

B. Prophetic Ministry (11:48)

The Prophets reminded the people:

- of the mercies that God had shown them

- of the requirement of loyal service

III. Covenant Judgment (14:28)

The prophets played an important role in the system of judgment. They were messengers of the covenant.

A. Types of Judgment (15:48)

Old Testament prophets looked to the Scriptures of the Old Testament for the kinds of judgments that the people should expect.

Five main passages guided the prophets:

- Deuteronomy 4:25-28
- Deuteronomy 28:15-68
- Deuteronomy 29:16-29
- Deuteronomy 32:15-43
- Leviticus 26:14-39

1. Judgment in Nature (17:19)

The world would become hostile to the people of God.

Six major types of natural judgments against the people of God.

- Droughts
- Famine
- Disease
- Wild animals
- Infertility
- Untimely Death

2. **Judgment in Warfare (19:22)**

Five major categories of judgment in warfare:

- Defeat
- Sieges
- Occupation of the land
- Death and destruction
- Captivity/exile

B. Process of Judgment (21:00)

Judgment took place over a long period of time and followed a particular pattern.

1. Divine Patience (21:47)

God exercised great patience toward his people when they sinned.

2. Increasing Severity (23:19)

The prophets warned of relatively small judgments, and then later they warned of greater judgments to come.

3. Particular Climax (24:55)

The worst judgment: utter devastation of the land and exile from that land.

God is gracious and patient and kind to his people, but he can be provoked to anger.

IV. Covenant Blessing (27:30)

God would judge his people severely, but Yahweh would not utterly forsake his covenant people.

A. Types of Blessings (28:19)

Blessings come to the people of God when they seek to be faithful to him.

1. Blessing in Nature (28:37)

God offered tremendous natural blessings if Israel would only serve him faithfully.

- Agricultural plenty
- Livestock would grow
- Health and prosperity
- Population increase

2. **Blessing in Warfare (30:40)**

Victory and peace under the blessings of covenant.

- Enemies defeated
- End to warfare
- Relief from all destruction
- Return of any captives
- Repentance and fidelity would lead to great blessings in nature and in war.

B. Process of Blessings (32:31)

Three principles govern the process of divine blessing.

1. Grace (32:55)

Basis for covenant blessing:

- mercy from God; forgiveness
- not human merit

2. Degrees (33:45)

There were lesser and greater degrees of blessing.

- Personal and individual blessings

- National blessings

3. Climax (35:16)

No matter what judgment came, there would always be a remnant (a group of faithful Israelites who would be spared).

It was through a remnant that God promised to bring the greatest blessing of all to his people.

The remnant would also receive great blessings in warfare.

God promised that despite the greatest punishment of exile, the remnant would receive the greatest blessing of restoration.

V. Conclusion (38:15)

3. Summarize the common types of covenant judgment.

4. Describe the three step-process of judgment.

5. What role did the prophets play in this system of judgment?

6. Describe the two main types of covenant blessing.

7. Explain the three-step process of blessing.

8. What role did the prophets play in this system of blessing?

Application Questions

1. How are the covenant motifs of blessing and cursing applied to people today?
2. Why and how does God test people with regards to covenant fidelity and responsibility?
3. According to Deuteronomy 29:25-28, God's people can provoke his anger. What are some ways that modern Christians might be angering God?
4. What emotional, intellectual and behavioral responses should Christians have to God's patience toward their sin?
5. Faithful Israelites knew that God's blessings depended on his mercy and forgiveness, not on human merit. In what ways do modern Christians seek to merit God's blessings? How might this affect their relationship with God? What practical steps can they take to begin to rely on God's mercy and forgiveness?
6. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study? Why?

Glossary

Abraham – Old Testament patriarch, son of Terah, father of the nation of Israel with whom God made a covenant in Genesis 15 and 17 promising innumerable descendants and a special land

Adam – The first man; husband of Eve; man with whom God made the covenant of foundations in which humanity was to fill and subdue the earth

covenant – A binding legal agreement made between two people or groups of people, or between God and a person or group of people

David – Second Old Testament king of Israel who received the promise that his descendant would sit on the throne and reign forever

Hezekiah – Son of Ahaz and king of Judah from approximately 716-686 B.C., known for his religious reforms and miraculous deliverance from Assyrian aggression in 701 B.C.

Moses – Old Testament prophet and deliverer who led the Israelites out of Egypt; man with whom God made a national "covenant of law" and who administered the Ten Commandments and the Book of the Covenant to the Israelites; also appeared with Elijah at Jesus' transfiguration

new covenant – The covenant of fulfillment in Christ; first mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31

Noah – Man who, under God's direction, built an ark and survived the Flood; individual with whom God made a universal covenant that promised the enduring stability of nature

Promised Land – The land that God promised to give as an inheritance to Abraham and his descendants

prophet – God's emissary who proclaims and applies God's word, especially to warn of judgment against sin and to encourage loyal service to God that leads to blessings

remnant – Term used in the Bible to refer to a group of faithful Israelites who would be spared the judgment that would come upon the unfaithful

suzerain-vassal treaty – A covenant arrangement made between a conquering emperor and a lesser ruler

Ten Commandments – Commandments given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai; expressions of God's eternal law that transcend all culture and times; also called *The Decalogue*